SPEECH OF SIR HOWARD DOUGLAS, BT., M.P., IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, ON FRIDAY MARCH 8TH 1844, ON THE ORDNANCE ESTIMATES.

On the first vote of 127,043*l.* for Ordnance Civil Establishments at home and abroad,

Dr. *Bowring* regretted that one general rule was not observed in drawing up the Public Estimates. He thought the Colonies ought to pay the expense of their own defence. The Ionian Islands were the only colonies which contributed from their public revenue for this object. He believed that if they put into the hands of the colonists a little more self-government they would be disposed to pay more of their own expenses.

Sir *H. Douglas* said, he appealed for relief from this contribution in favour of an interesting and peculiar people, thrown back at this time of day, by the remarkable vicissitudes in their history, for regeneration, in their social, moral, and political condition, and to whom we had solemnly pledged a peculiar and paternal solicitude. Placed on the confines of civilisation, these interesting Islands presented a wide and noble field for improvement, when they came under the dominion of a Christian power. But it would ever be considered a stain in the history of Venice, and he must say in that of other Christian States, that whilst the Ionian Islands were used for maritime and military, and even for spiritual purposes, as the bulwarks of Christianity against the Infidels, no monument should have been raised, to commemorate the possession which the Venetian Government so long held, of those Islands, by any act which could show that, with real Christian spirit, they attended paternally to the moral and physical well-being of the people, and the general amelioration of those most interesting Islands. This was a duty which had devolved upon this great country. The glory and honour of our beloved Sovereign, the credit of the Government, the character of the country were at stake. We had under our protecting wing an interesting, a peculiar people, inhabiting a fair and classical region. All the sympathies and associations—classical, historical, ancient and modern, which we imbibed in our youth, and should carry with us to our graves—taught us to regard with deep interest, that peculiar people, whose destinies we held in trust for good or for evil—for our glory, or to our shame. He should startle the House, shock the country, and wound the character of any British Government, were he to tell of the sacrifices and privations which were endured to enable the Ionian Government to liquidate the fixed tribute which they were bound to pay, and the manner and extent to which the exaction of this bond, retarded amelioration in the general condition of the Ionian Islands. [Lord *Stanley* here said, "It is done.] Done! when done? why was he not told of it? He appealed to the Committee whether he (Sir H. Douglas) having represented the case of the Ionian Islands, as now briefly stated, in 1838 to Lord Glenelg, in 1838 to Lord Normanby, and in 1839, 1840, and 1841, to Lord J. Russell, and in 1842 to his noble Friend the Secretary for the Colonies, Lord Stanley—having, too, on his request, not called for the production of papers which, by an order of the last session, were forthcoming, he (Sir H. Douglas) appealed to the Committee, whether the noble Lord had treated him either as a supporter of Her Majesty's Government, or as a friend of the noble Lord's, as he ought to have done; and therefore, he (Sir H. Douglas) would go through the case he had in hand, without now heeding what the noble Lord had said. No one who was thoroughly acquainted with the Ionian Islands could, for a moment, doubt that the peculiar circumstances, and anomalous condition of those Islands, and the wants and necessities of the Ionian people, had not been considered as they ought to have been. Those Islands are not, as the hon. and learned Member for Bolton has inadvertently said, colonies. They are placed in a middle state, between the colonial and perfectly free independent state, without having, in some important respects, the advantages of either. Their productions are treated as foreign productions, although their ships are admitted to all the privileges of British vessels. An enormous duty, no less than 19½ per cent. is imposed on the export of those productions, to enable the Ionian Government to meet its obligations. That source of revenue has failed, by the diminution in price from about 7½ dollars to about 18 per 1000 lbs., whilst the duty levied on the import of those productions into the United Kingdom, is upwards of 130 per cent on their prime cost. The progress of improvement of every description in the Ionian Islands is vastly retarded, and in some cases thrown back, by the exaction of this bond. The appropriations for public instruction are diminished; the public roads are falling into dilapidation and decay. There is no prison in Corfu; for want of that most essential institution an old fort is used as a receptacle for offenders, convicts, and criminals of every age and description, without the possibility of classification or discipline. Lunatics were the inmates of prisons, associated with criminals and felons, for want of a lunatic asylum, until he (Sir H. Douglas) converted another old fort into a receptacle for those unhappy beings; and nothing has yet been done, from want of means, to provide a suitable building and establishment, in lieu of those temporary expedients. Every practicable exertion had been made by the Ionian Government to reduce the expenditure, and to increase the revenue, to enable the Ionian States to pay this enormous fixed tribute, and the other charges for British protection. He (Sir H. Douglas) must advert to another sad part of this case. To give effect to an act passed in the time of his predecessor, Lord Nugent, he (Sir H. Douglas) had instituted a poor-house and house-of-industry at Corfu, for the reception of mendicants, so numerous in the Islands, and other destitute persons. That establishment had been abolished, since his (Sir H. Douglas's) departure, although it contained three paupers upwards of ninety years of age, six upwards of eighty, and many other destitute persons, far advanced in life. He (Sir H. Douglas) did not mean to assert, that the noble Lord had expressly ordered this to be done; but he did mean to say, that the instructions to pay up the contribution—to insist upon our bond, were so stringent, as to render this, and other sacrifices necessary. On these grounds, he (Sir H. Douglas) would appeal to the Committee, to the Government, and to the country, for some abatement and mitigation of these rates and terms. He advised and implored Her Majesty's Government to extend relief to the Ionian Islands before it became too late. The present, certainly, were not times of danger, but times of danger might come; and it was, therefore, to be hoped that Ministers would adopt the course he recommended, as likely to prove creditable to themselves, beneficial to the Ionian Islands, and which would ensure to this country, the everlasting gratitude of the Ionian people.